

As a journalist, I am outraged by Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to require its television stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election, under the guise of "news." Not only is this grossly misleading, it is an ominous example of the kinds of abuse owners can indulge in when there are no limits to the number of stations they can buy.

Back when we believed that the airwaves belonged to the people, broadcast property owners were held to high standards of responsibility and accountability, and I have watched with dismay as those standards have been undermined or discarded. The widespread airing of blatant propaganda just before an election is the entirely foreseeable result of the commission's abdication of its own responsibilities in that regard. Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line--or what's good for the companies politically--and less of what we need for a strong, thriving democracy.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.